Sonnet Reveries

BY

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One April Eve

ONE April eve as Earth impatient broke
From Winter's clasp to greet the coming Spring,
In converse deep while homeward sauntering
The spirit music in our souls awoke,
As harpstrings vibrant to the Master's stroke.
Through all the naked branches overhead,
The moonrays soft a subtle radiance shed
That lit the revels of the fairy folk
And cast quaint shadows on the paving stone.
The naked branches—so they seem to be
Till in the shadow on the pavement thrown
We saw the swelling buds just bursting free.
O Life, how oft to us in shade is shown
What in the substance we had failed to see!

Sympathy

BEHIND the prison bars of circumstance,
Whose stiff, time-rusted bolts I could not force,
I stood alone and watched afar the course
Of sun and stars, or cast a longing glance
Towards some bright, tow'ring height: anear, perchance,
The sound of revelling on mine ear fell,
Oft hushed to silence by a funeral knell.
Many scarce pausing in the merry dance
Did cry, "O laggard, burst thy living tomb;
Soft is the greensward, cool the scented dell,
Come share with us the brightness and the bloom."
But one stood by me in the chill and gloom;
And felt as I felt all the woeful spell,
Though how she forced the bars I ne'er could tell.

Sorrow

O SORROW, once I feared to see thy face
And pictured thee as some dim phantom grim
Like those which haunted childhood's precincts dim.
No light upon thy pathway could I trace,
No loveliness of form, no touch of grace.
Thy cup of suff'ring, bitter to the brim,
I feared to drink e'en though 'twere filled by Him,
The Friend and Lover of mankind's whole race.
But now I know thee, Angel Sorrow mild,
Not a grim monster from a trackless wild,
But a rare guardian from the Father's home,
Sent forth to keep the footsteps of His child,
Lest following every tempter's whispered, "Come,"
He lose the home-path to forever roam.

Joy

LONG, long before I knew thee, Angel Joy,
I pictured thee as some gay, laughing sprite,
A very incarnation of delight;
Nor knew the nectar in thy cup would cloy,
Or touch of time thy loveliness destroy.
I fancied thou wert ever poised for flight,
Lest Sorrow hov'ring near should sudden light
Too near thee, or some brighter form decoy
Thee from my side. How do I know thee now?
A sweet, abiding presence, calm and still,
Oft clasping Sorrow close; through good, through ill,
A smile upon thy lips, unruffled brow
So radiant, I scarce will now avow
That other e'er had power to charm or thrill.

Humility

I CANNOT picture thee with downcast eyes,
Of shrinking, cringing form or drooping mien,
Aye dwelling lowly amid scenes terrene,
While heavenward all thy sister graces rise
Unfettered. Nay, the joy of high emprise
Is thine as theirs. From thee this fleshly screen
Veils not the wonders of a world unseen
Which opens only to the lowly wise.
There 'whelmed by Love's breadth and depth and height,
No sense of weakness doth thy soul enthral
As low in adoration thou dost fall
Before the presence of the Infinite;
But these the words that from thy lips take flight,
"Through Christ who strengtheneth I can do all."

The Birth of a Thought

UPON the confines of my thought-world played
So faint it scarce could aught of gloom dispel.
A trembling light that on a chaos fell,
Or through the firmament of fancy strayed
Formless, impalpable, unorbed, unrayed.
Whene'er, as drawn by resistless spell,
I strove to fix the phantasm, it befell
That I retreated from the task dismayed.
At length, from out the infinite unknown,
Another light upon its dimness shone,
A distant thought-world circled into ken;
The spheres in their orbits touched and then—
No longer thought-mist quivering afar,
But in the spirit's firmament a star!

Love's Awakening

I DO not know that thou dost love me, dear;
  I dare not own that what I feel for thee,
  A strange, new sense of rapturous sympathy
In every thought, a dread lest thou anear,
Should'st read mine inmost thought with insight clear,
  Is that which men call love. I only see
  Far off the vision of an argosy
Freighted with doubt, hope, sadness, joy, and fear.
I only know that when my soul meets thine
  Its richest, truest harmonies awake,
  E'en though they may not into music break;
That when the light of thy thought reaches mine
I see afar the heavenly splendors shine
  As sun-gold gleams upon a silver lake.

Yielding is Sin

UPON the threshold of my spirit's home
There stood a tiny form which softly knocked
To crave admission at the door fast locked,
Its mien alluring, raiment white as foam.
In haste I drew the bolt and whispered, "Come."
But swift the warder, Conscience, entrance blocked
And thundered in mine ear, "Art thou, too, mocked?
It is a sin-form hideous as a gnome.
Gaze not nor harken." But no heed I gave.
The soft-voiced, beauteous thing did enter in,
Its shining mantle dropped and soon the din
Of strife and passion rose. What now can save?
In its own home my spirit dwells a slave
To that first evil and its brood of sin.

The Pine

MOURNFUL through all the joyance of the Spring,
Frowning upon the rapture of the trees
Outflinging leaf and blossom to the breeze,
Rigid above the aspens quivering,
It stood dark-visaged, stern, a sombre thing.
Far from the flow'ry riot of the leas
It held itself aloof as one who sees
A mystic sorrow overshadowing.
But when the laughter of the year was stilled,
Its changeless verdure smiled through Autumn's tears;
When field and vale and wood lay shorn and chilled,
Its tasselled boughs crooned rest-songs void of fears.
Skyward it towered amid the snow-waste drear,
Emblem of life and courage, hope and cheer.

A Dream of Fame

I.

TWO workers lowly in a valley wrought
On task intent, through circling days and years;
Sun-gladdened oft, as oft sight-dimmed by tears.
Each toiled unnoted save by Him who taught;
None weighed the heavy hours, the moments fraught
With blunders, failure, self-distrust, and fears.
One hungered for love's praise, the great world's cheers,
Yet stayed him through the famine with the thought
That laggard time would bring to him his meed
And the whole populace should hail him great.
The other recked not of his lowly fate,
Nor in the future's scroll did strive to read
A golden-lettered name; so naught gave heed
Save that his work might reach perfection's state.

II.

COMPLETION nigh, eyes lifted caught a gleam
Of fitful radiance; on strained ears fell
A rustle as of wings, while in a spell
They saw a glorious being who did seem
Angel or demon, which they could not deem.
Each heard the clear notes of his trumpet swell;
Each saw the crown he bore; but one did quell
His discontent. One wrought as in a dream,
Then dropped his task to follow far the flight
Of errant pinions and the crown to claim.
The great wings swept the ebon arc of night;
Then the clear trumpet sounded on the height,
Not his—but the meek, steadfast worker's name
Uncrowned he wakened from his dream of fame.